THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) No, Sir. The Russian authorities are considering a pipeline from the Eastern Siberian oilfields to the Pacific coast. We have expressed our interest in associating ourselves with the project. The initial reaction has been positive.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Coal bed methane projects of ONGC

1256. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether ONGC has proposed to take up coal bed methane projects across the country;

(b) whether ONGC has invited bids for development and commercial exploitation of coal bed methane blocks and if so, the location of blocks identified therefor; and

(c) whether the ONGC is also lending its expertise on coal bed methane production to Zimbabwe and if so, whether ONGC will invest in Zimbabwe CBM projects?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Yes, Sir. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) either single or in consortium with other PSUs, have signed contracts with the Government for exploration and production of Coal Bed Methane (CBM) in 9 blocks situated in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat;

(b) No, Sir. Till date, no bid has been invited by ONGC. However, an expression of interest has been invited by ONGC for integrated turnkey contracts for exploration, production and development of its CBM blocks.

(c) No, Sir. At present, ONGC is not lending its expertise in CBM production to Zimbabwe , but a delegation from Zimbabwe visited India recently to broach the subject of cooperation in this sector.

Objectives of ONGC

1257. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the core activity of ONGC;